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Wm. J. Parker
ANNUAL REPORT *June 1st 1845*
OF THE
SCHOOL COMMITTEE
OF THE
TOWN OF ROXBURY.

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PRESENTED TO THE TOWN MARCH 3, 1845.  
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At the annual Town Meeting in March last, the sum of six thousand dollars was appropriated for the erection of a new building in the rear of the old Dudley school-house, to accommodate the growing numbers of that flourishing school. A sub-committee, consisting of Messrs. Walley, Seaver and Walker, made the contracts and superintended the work. They presented the key to us in October ; and the upper hall has been since occupied by the two highest divisions of the Dudley school. The house is convenient, pleasant, and thoroughly built. The committee regard it, both as to the exterior and interior, with much complacency ; and trust that their fellow citizens are satisfied with the investment. The estimates upon which the appropriation was based, contemplated the finishing of only one of the halls. But the committee, considering that the other hall would soon be wanted, and that the two could be finished with less inconvenience and expense at once and under a single contract, concluded that they should best consult the interests of the town by finishing both—which was accordingly done—hence the excess of expenditure over the appropriation, as seen in the Auditors' Report. That excess is so much, and something more, saved in the appropria-

tions for the coming year. We may as well add here, that the lower hall thus finished will require to be *furnished* this year with seats, desks, &c. for use; and in our estimate of appropriations we shall introduce an item for this purpose.

At the same Town Meeting fifteen hundred dollars were raised for adding another story to the Westerly school-house. The work has been done under the direction of Mr. Cowing, and done, we believe, to the full satisfaction of the people of West Roxbury as well as of this committee. The expense has considerably exceeded the appropriation. In excuse for this unpleasant fact, we can only say, that the estimate (always difficult to make in regard to the alteration of old houses) must have been made without due care in this case. The work having been ordered and begun, must be completed. Nothing has been done there that any one can wish undone; and it will not be doubted that the expenditure has been managed with economy and fidelity.

Extensive repairs have been made the last year on the school-house in Sumner street. Some had thought that the house must be abandoned; but by this comparatively small outlay, it has been put in good order—almost renewed;—and will answer its purposes for many years. It was found necessary last summer to employ an assistant teacher for one of the schools in that building—an expense not anticipated when the appropriations for the year were made.

After the town meeting was dissolved in March last, the committee were notified by the trustees of the Eliot school, that if we continued to occupy their school-house we must pay rent for it at the rate of three hundred dollars a year. We suppose they had a perfect right to make this demand. We saw no alternative but to comply with it, or have our

school turned out of doors. We have accordingly paid rent (\$ 225 00) from May to February,—an expense not foreseen. Provision should be made for it for the ensuing year.

The Town raised nine hundred dollars to purchase land and erect a Primary school-house near Nute's corner. The business was transacted by the late Mr. B. P. Williams. The whole sum appropriated was necessarily expended on the house, and we have had to support the school five months, without any means provided therefor. It is known to some members of the committee that Mr. Williams intended to present to this meeting the claims of Mr. Hodgdon, the builder of the house, for remuneration for losses suffered by him in fulfilling his contract. Mr. Williams considered it an equitable claim. We do not know the merits of the case, but our respect for the known views of our deceased colleague, has induced us to make this allusion to the subject, that the town may refer the same for inquiry, if they see fit.

The several particulars which we have stated above, explain, if they do not justify, the whole excess of expenditure charged against us in the Auditors' Report. The *ordinary* expense for the support of the schools has been kept within the bounds prescribed by the town.

The amount of money expended in the support of schools during the year now closed has been large.

The committee, as tax payers themselves, and as acting for a tax paying constituency, have been anxious to avoid every thing like a wasteful or unnecessary expenditure. Some citizens may have supposed they had discovered in us an inclination to extravagance. We have thought therefore that it might be instructive to ourselves and satisfacto-

ry to the town, to institute some comparisons between the expense incurred in 1844, and that of other previous years.

We supposed that if we were chargeable with extravagance any where, it would be in the sums we pay for the support of the Grammar schools in the easterly part of the town—the Washington and Dudley. In order to understand the full extent of our enormities, if we were guilty of any, and face the truth, however appalling, we have taken up our old record book, and gone back to a period when those two schools were snugly lodged in two rooms over this town hall, and made a comparison as to expense. The fair way of instituting a comparison, seemed to be to ascertain the cost of instruction *per head* at the two periods severally. We turned to the record for the year 1838. It appears there from the report of an examining committee who visited those schools in December of that year, that they found one hundred and sixty-seven pupils present, which we may safely presume to be as high as the average number attending at that time. Those schools were then going on at a cost, for instruction, of \$1400 per annum. Dividing this sum by 167, the number of pupils, we have \$8 38 as the cost of educating each child for one year in those schools. Turning then to the minutes of the present committee, relating to the Dudley and Washington schools for the year now closing, it appears that at the examination in February, there were present in both six hundred and forty-one pupils, which may be taken as before for the average number, and dividing the cost of instruction as given in the Auditors' Report by that number, we have \$7 29 for each pupil, in 1844,—showing a difference in our favor of \$1 09 for every child, or a saving of 13 per cent. on the price paid for instruction in 1838. But we feared that this comparison

with a year so recent as 1838, though so favorable and gratifying, would not be satisfactory to all. It was but six years ago. Some of their own number were on the Board then. The career of extravagance was already begun. Modern times with all their prodigality had set in. Taxes for all purposes were becoming high. The appropriation for the support of schools had risen to what was then the astounding amount of \$5000. The school committee were growing profuse. One salary had been raised \$100 above the old immemorial rate. Some innovations had been made, and there was "no knowing where such things would end." We ought to look further back: accordingly we turned back six years further, as far, that is, as the records would furnish sufficient statistics, to 1832. That year joined on to the good old times. Those were the days of prudent counsels, the era of economy, the golden age of low taxes and cheap schools. The amount raised for the whole support of all the schools in town was but \$3200. We shall find a fair test there of our extravagance in 1844. We turn to the committee's minutes for the Town-house schools, then in full operation. We take the number of pupils found in those schools at two several visitations, in May and November, and take the mean between those numbers, and by that mean number divide the amount of salaries paid to the teachers that year, and we find that it cost \$9 17 per head to educate children in our Grammar Schools in 1832, that is, \$1 88 or 25 per cent. more than it has cost to educate them in 1844, in the Dudley and Washington, into which those Town-house schools have since expanded. Whether the instruction has been reduced in quality as much as in expense, we leave to the judgment of others, but the uneasiness of our minds under the charge of growing extravagance has been considerably quieted by these investigations.

We have pursued these inquiries only in reference to the comparative cost of instruction. As to *school houses* they have been built no larger or faster than has been absolutely necessary for the accommodation of children demanding admittance, and always under the direction of building committees composed of practical men who have made the most favorable contracts in their power.

The simple fact, and one that explains the whole matter of our large expenditures, is this, that the number of persons between the ages of four and sixteen, claiming access to our public schools, has increased and is increasing, immensely—a fact for which the committee are not in any particular manner responsible. We instruct each individual child cheaper than was done six or twelve years ago, but we are overwhelmed by numbers. In our own secret breasts we of the committee do not lament this fact, but as concerns appropriations, it is lamentable indeed, and utterly incurable as far as we can see.

We proceed to state the wants of the coming year, which are not small.

The first item, in course, is an appropriation for a new school-house. There must be a new school-house. Let any citizen cast a glance over the region lying North and West of this hill, and he will know why and where, and when. The present Primary schools at which the inhabitants of that section get accommodated, or rather fail to get accommodated, are overflowing. The new house should be placed somewhere in the area inclosed by Tremont, Ruggles and Orange streets. As land is expensive, a two-story building would be most economical. Indeed, our member from that quarter says, that two rooms would be filled immediately, and if he judges from past experience in that neighborhood,

he has good reason to think so. The land, with a suitable building, sufficient for two large Primary schools, is estimated to cost twenty-five hundred dollars,—for which the committee recommend an appropriation.

There ought to be a Primary school in the neighborhood of Mount Pleasant; but as we have not been pressed upon the subject by the inhabitants, and as our members residing thereabouts have been absent from our recent meetings, we have not gone into the case minutely, on its merits. Perhaps it is an evasion of duty on our part, but we are not prepared to recommend an appropriation.

A new school is also needed, somewhere near the junction of Cedar street and the Dedham turnpike, to accommodate a district extending from St. James street to Lambert avenue, and including the village which was once the Maccarty farm. We allude to this case and the preceding one, at this time, only as an intimation of the good deeds which the town will have the satisfaction of doing next year.

The pay of teachers for the coming year, will amount to a considerably larger sum than in any former year. It will require about twelve thousand dollars to carry out the views of the committee on this head. The increase is chiefly owing to the additional number of teachers which will be necessary—not fewer than six, in our opinion, of various grades. It is right, however, that the town should be informed that about five hundred dollars of the twelve thousand dollars, is for the increase of salaries for several teachers already employed. The additional five hundred dollars will be distributed among eleven persons, for various reasons in different cases; either because the labors of some teachers are peculiarly arduous and their offices difficult to be filled in the event of vacancies, for which reason a

discrimination should be made in their favor, (which is especially the case with regard to the female assistants in the Grammar schools;) or because a male teacher is required in a certain position usually occupied by a female; or because in a particular instance, a teacher whose services have been long continued, and have become very valuable and much desired by all on any reasonable terms, may thus, by a slightly increased compensation, be retained for the town. This latter principle is one which it is plainly for the interest of the town to act upon, and this committee might well have deserved the thanks of the town, if they had acted on it sooner and more efficiently. The increase of pay is limited to teachers in the Grammar schools, but notwithstanding the increase, we might safely guarantee that the cost of Grammar school instruction for our children will still be less per head than it was in 1832 or 1838. Our system is such in the large schools, that as their numbers increase, we may afford to secure the services of our best and most indispensable teachers, by a small addition to their pay, and still, as to the cost of instructing each child, retrench on the expense of former years.

We shall append to this Report, our estimate of appropriations required for the ensuing year.

With regard to *internal affairs*, our schools have had various fortunes during the year, as must be expected in so large a number so variously situated. On the whole, we think they have fulfilled the reasonable expectations of the committee and the town. Some have decidedly gained upon their former standing, and were never in so flourishing a condition, and so worthy of confidence as at this moment. Others have just about maintained their old ground. And some, we think, have deteriorated somewhat since the last

Annual Report was made. We forbear to make any more definite discriminations on this occasion. It will be the duty of our successors in this office, to look carefully after any school that may be losing ground, to search out the cause, and rigorously remove it, if it prove to be one within their control.

The subject of school *Discipline* is one which has engaged the public attention very much of late, here and elsewhere. There is a strong and growing desire that schools should be governed with the rarest possible resort to corporal punishment. There is a feeling that there are other practicable means of influence, which, by being studied and applied, may in a great measure and to an indefinite degree, supercede the necessity of personal chastisement. This committee participate deeply in that feeling. We have given much consideration to the subject, and are encouraged to believe that amelioration of the school code in this respect is practicable, is now actually going on amongst us, and will still be carried much farther,—perhaps to the fullest extent that can be desired by any. We believe that there has been less resort to corporal punishment in our schools as a body, during the last year than in any previous year, in proportion to the number of children attending them. We have taken some pains to procure statistical information on this point, as respects the last quarter. From records kept by the teachers we learn that in the two upper divisions of the Washington school, consisting of one hundred and thirty boys, wholly under the care of the two principal masters, there has been an average of five punishments a month for the last three months, some of them very slight and almost nominal, and some inflicted at the express demand of parents. This is not quite one quarter of the number of

punishments inflicted in the same time on the same number of children, (half *girls*,) in one of the best Grammar schools in Boston. In the Eliot school, (eighty boys,) there has been an average of one punishment a month for the last five months. In the Westerly school, numbering eighty pupils, there has been one case of punishment during the last quarter ;—in the Dudley, with three hundred pupils, only one. These results are encouraging as to what may be expected for the future.

In what has been said above, we refer to punishment by the rod—flogging of some sort. In some cases teachers, from a laudable desire to avoid that odious method, have resorted to other methods of punishment. These substitutes, designed to be milder than whipping, may not have been always judicious, though well intended. Wherever any such substituted punishment is found to be objectionable, the slightest suggestion from the committee is sufficient to prevent a repetition of them.

Particular circumstances may at times lead to an unusual degree of severity ; as for instance, when a long established and popular Principal leaves a school, some of the boys, perfectly assured and resolved that they shall never be satisfied with any successor, set out to try their strength against a new Principal, with whom they are not inclined to co-operate kindly in securing the necessary order, and thus he may think it necessary to resort to the rod more frequently than will be necessary after he becomes established in his authority.

Punishments may sometimes be inflicted wrongfully, through the misapprehension or misjudgment of the teacher. This is a great misfortune. But all kinds of government are necessarily imperfect, and sometimes err, and some allowance should be made for human fallibility.

Much allowance should be made, too, for the great and peculiar trials of teachers. Their temper and patience are tried to a degree unknown, we believe, in any other situation in life. Parents, with their two or three or half a dozen children, know nothing of it. Possibly a case may have occurred here and there of punishment inflicted unnecessarily or too severely, from a momentary giving way of patience and self-control. It would be strange and almost miraculous were it never so. We ought to know ourselves too well, to be very harsh and uncompromising in our judgment of such cases unless they are frequent. We believe that our teachers, for so numerous a body, are remarkable for self-government, whether as compared with teachers generally, or with the citizens at large, and that they endure the vexations and crosses of their position in reference to their pupils, with more equanimity and forbearance, than any equal number of persons, taken at random from among our men and women, would be found to manifest in their relation as parents. We have more occasion to follow the example of school teachers in this respect, than to denounce their imperfections.

The fact that the subject of punishment in schools has been much discussed of late, and that the tide of feeling is strongly in favor of diminishing or abolishing it,—this fact, though tending ultimately to the best results, may for a time have such an effect upon the schools, as to render necessary more punishments than ever. The pupils get a vague impression, that corporal punishment is no longer to be tolerated, that the teacher will be forbidden to inflict it, will not be sustained in inflicting it, their parents, the committee, the community will not allow it—let the teacher punish if he dare. Out of this impression grows something like a spirit of defiance, insubordination, a tentative disobedience.

ence,—and then there must be punishment indeed. The idea of immunity and independence with which some boys get indoctrinated at home and elsewhere, sometimes becomes so troublesome that it can only be removed by a personal experience of its fallacy. We have known messages from parents, verbal and written, sent to the teacher through the hands of the scholars,—messages of such a character that it is not to be wondered at, if it be found necessary that boys going to school with such ideas of liberty and equality, should be made to feel that there is an authority there which must be respected and submitted to, whatever ideas on the subject may prevail elsewhere.

We have felt bound to make these remarks in justice to our teachers. At the same time we will express our conviction that the amount of punishment in schools may be diminished still farther, and that in every view it is exceedingly desirable. We believe that there are resources, at the command of every intelligent teacher, with kind disposition, firmness of character, and strong and hearty moral sympathies, resources of a more mild, generous and elevated nature, which by being more fully developed and resorted to, will be entirely sufficient, or almost so, under ordinary circumstances, for the good government of a school, and that the time will come when the necessity for corporal chastisement will cease nearly or quite. We believe that our teachers think with us and feel with us on this subject, that with the best spirit they are applying themselves to those higher resources, and are as desirous as we are, to discover and use them and make them sufficient. But the improvement must not be hurried inordinately. It cannot be had as the fruit of any revolution. Excitement and agitation will put it back lamentably. The *power* to punish must not be taken from the teachers.

If it is to be exercised less and less, as we hope, the diminution must be the free act of the teacher, availing himself of course of the advice and support of the committee. The scholars must never see that the master is not trusted, is put under restraint, and is mild by compulsion. *Forbid* the use of the rod, and some schools would be broken up. Give authority only to persons whom you can trust, but give it, always; and co-operate with them in efforts to render its exercise unnecessary. Some of our teachers have already determined to inflict no more corporal punishment; others have virtually discontinued it, and are approaching a final decision to that effect; and all, we believe, are looking to that result as exceedingly desirable, and will spare no endeavors to reach it. Any teacher who shall manifest an *appetite* for the rod hereafter, and shall entertain such views of boy-nature, as to have no faith in the superiority of other influences, and no hope of dispensing more and more with the rod, any such teacher, if we have, or are to have any such, would probably be discharged from our service, by any committee that the town is likely to elect. But in order to diminish the frequency of punishment indefinitely, as we desire, and at the same time maintain good order unimpaired and improved, we must give the teacher fair play. We must maintain his authority inviolate. We must put confidence in him, and let the young see that we do. A strong reserved power is the necessary foundation and back-ground for good government, and the best guarantee of a mild administration. Fear is often the *beginning* of wisdom: to some temperaments it seems almost the only practicable beginning. Love will cast it out, but *let* love cast it out, and not think to do it by arbitrarily removing every thing that can be the object of fear. Love will do it if we will give her a fair field, and not meddle

with, nor attempt to force, her gentle and noiseless processes.

A spirit of antagonism and hostility between the parents and the teachers, jealousy, distrust, evil-speaking, and the circulation of exaggerated rumors are very unfavorable to the peace of a school and the success of a teacher. These things are to be deprecated, and put away from amongst us. Teachers should not be blamed and denounced for enforcing those rules respecting punctual attendance, which the Committee have deemed necessary for the general welfare, although the enforcement may operate as a hardship or inconvenience to some individuals. There is hardly any subject which we are more anxious to press upon the consideration of those citizens who send children to the public schools than this—the great importance of a punctual and regular attendance on the part of the pupils, without which no school can flourish.

Our schools are on the whole in a prosperous state ; our money has not been thrown away. And now if parents will put reasonable confidence in the teachers, if the town will trust their committee, if the committee will exercise due care and discretion and independence, and the teachers will (as we feel perfectly assured they will) aspire to a constant improvement in matters of instruction and government ; then, all working together with one consent and one aim, the coming year will witness the growing prosperity of our schools, an elevation in their character, and the extension of their usefulness.

We cannot close this report without indulging in a brief allusion to our late lamented associate, the Hon. Benjamin P. Williams. He was our senior member as to length of service. His wisdom in counsel, his firmness of character

and purpose, and his untiring and consistent zeal in the cause of good education, rendered him a valuable member of our Board. He regarded the interests of the schools more than money, and sustained all liberal measures for their improvement, and yet he was a wise and prudent economist. His presence among us added strength to our body. The loss of one who was an honest man, and an intelligent and honored citizen, is felt in many relations both private and public, and not least in the service of those humble institutions, which he esteemed among the greatest and most precious for a good citizen to labor for and cherish.

Respectfully submitted,

For the School Committee.

GEORGE PUTNAM, *Chairman.*

Roxbury, March 3, 1845.

ESTIMATE

Of sums to be raised by the town, and expended under the direction of the next School Committee, for the support of schools for the year 1845-6 :

For pay of Teachers,	\$ 12,115 75
For fuel,	750 00
For books	100 00
For expenses of Committee,	200 00
Rent of Eliot school-house,	300 00
Furnishing room in new Dudley school,	500 00
Contingent expenses,	1,200 00
New school-house,	2,500 00
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Total,	\$ 17,665 75

Roxbury, March 10th, 1845. The preceding Report and Estimate was submitted to the Town, accepted and referred to the Selectmen, with instructions to cause two thousand copies to be printed and distributed among the inhabitants of the town.

A true copy of record and of the original,

Attest, NATH'L S. PRENTISS, *Town Clk.*

JOSEPH G. TORREY, Pr. 23 Devonshire st.

